

Christians have stubbornly held to their faith in spite of bitter persecution, and now, as they are determined to sin against the light and follow their own caprice, more in sorrow than in anger, he will recognise their status as Christians and give them the right of assembly, provided they do not offend against public discipline. But the special interest of this edict lies in the Emperor's request that the Christians will pray for him, in the despairing hope that Christ may succeed, where Apollo has failed, in finding a remedy for his grievous case. Galerius was ready to clutch at any passing straw.

The edict bore the names of Galerius, of Constantine, and of Licinius. Maxentius, who at this time ruled Italy, was not recognised by Galerius, so the absence of his name causes no surprise. Maximin's name is also absent, but we find one of his praefects, Sabinus, addressing shortly afterwards a circular letter to all the Governors of Cilicia, Syria, and Egypt, in which the signal was given to stop the persecution. Like Galerius, Maximin declared that the sole object of the Emperors had been to lead all men back to a pious and regular life, and to restore to the gods those who had embraced alien rites contrary to the spirit of the institutions of Rome. Then the letter continued :

"But since the mad obstinacy of certain people has reached such a pitch that they are not to be shaken in their resolution either by the justice of the imperial command or by the fear of imminent punishment, and since, actuated by these motives, a very large number have brought themselves into positions of extreme peril,